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Bangalore Mirror

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PRICE CATCH

Kumbh Mela: Airlines jack up prices; B'luru-Prayagraj flight fares higher than price of tickets to Bangkok and Dubai

PAGE 2

CHICK PET

Rescuers report parakeets most vulnerable during breeding season as poachers raid nests to capture chicks

PAGE 6

Proof-of-parking: Concept that can decongest Bengaluru? Mobility experts discuss this and other reforms in Motor Vehicle Act that may work

THE CHOKE IS ON US

City needs parking policy with short and long-term goals

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Bengaluru's congested roads, with cars and two-wheeler parks on both sides, can be eased with certain policies and reforms in the Motor Vehicle Act, say mobility experts.

One such policy is Japan's 'proof-of-parking' that mandates car owners to obtain a 'parking certificate' to prove that they have access to an off-street parking space. Notably, Maharashtra Transport Department is considering the Japanese model to address congestion on roads.

Under the policy, all car and two-wheeler owners are required to obtain this certificate from local police. New vehicles are registered only when this certificate is produced.

"We have been highlighting that push measures to discourage private vehicles are missing in our city. While it is important to ensure pull measures such as improvements in public transport including a dense network of mass transit systems along with cycling and walking tracks, they cannot become attractive unless supplemented with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 »

PAGE 5: RELICS OF VEHICLES PAST

"BMLTA was supposed to be an overarching planning authority to ensure that multiple agencies can work together seamlessly toward the development of sustainable urban mobility. However, it is yet to be constituted — Mobility expert

Life hanging by a wire

Rider's death in accident after getting entangled in hanging cable puts spotlight on hazard

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The menace of unattended cables hanging across Bengaluru's roads has once again proven fatal, claiming the life of a 23-year-old techie on January 24. Rohit R Patil lost his life after his scooter got entangled in a low-hanging optical fibre cables (OFC) on ITPL Main Road near the Passport Office Compound. This tragic incident has highlighted the ongoing negligence of civic authorities in ensuring road safety.

According to a complaint filed by Rohit's family, the incident occurred while he was traveling from Anjaneya Junction to Kundalahalli Junction. The low-hanging cables obstructed his path, tangling with his vehicle and throwing him off balance. Rohit fell on the left side of the road, while his scooter landed on the right and a BMTC bus, which could not immediately slow down, ran over him, leading to fatal head injuries. The young techie died on the spot.

The family has demanded legal action against the officials responsible for the low-hanging cables and the driver of the BMTC bus. Their complaint highlights the serious threat posed by such unattended hazards, questioning the effectiveness of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) maintenance and monitoring mechanisms.

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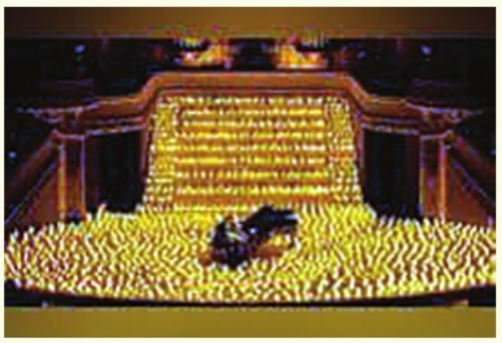
THINGS TO DO



01 Let music shine on

Candlelight Concerts is a global concept that aims to make classical music more accessible by hosting performances in venues that highlight each city's cultural heritage. The concert in held in the light of thousands of candles, making it a surreal experience. Pianist Sriharsha Jade is set to mesmerise Bengaluru with "Candlelight Concert Queen vs Abba". **Where: *Forum Mall, 3rd Floor, Konanakunte; When: Jan 31, 7 pm and 9 pm**

02 Soulful bhajans

Tarangini Arts Foundation will celebrate its Golden Jubilee with a musical event, Meera Tarangini, a soulful journey through the timeless Meera bhajans, brought to life by a 50-member instrumental musical ensemble. **Where: Chowdaiah Memorial Hall, Vyalikaval, Gayathri Devi Park; When: February 2, 6 pm**

03 Crafts work

The 'Craft India Exhibition', featuring an array of colorful and diverse clothing, is ongoing. The exhibition showcases an impressive collection of winter and summer apparel. **Where: Chitrakala Parishath; When: Till February 2**

04 Play time

Alchemy Theatre Society is back with a new production - I Wasn't Born Confused directed by Mihir Deshpande. The play is a humorous exploration of why many young people today feel uncertain about marriage. **Where: Jagriti Theatre; When: Jan 31 – 7:30 pm, Feb1 – 3:30 pm & 7:30 pm**

05 Print art

Bengaluru Print Exchange International (BPEI) 24 show features 64 printmakers (29 international+ 35 National). **Where: Lavaru Art Gallery #698, Nisarga Layout, Bannerghatta Jigani Road, When: Ongoing till Feb 5; 10 am to 6 pm**

Cybercrime vigilance on wheels

To create cybercrime awareness amongst the public, SBI Bengaluru circle in coordination with the CEN police station, West Division, have flagged off a vehicle with digital display on cyber frauds. The event was held at SBI LHO Campus, in presence of Girish S, IPS, DCP, West Division, Umarani S, ACP and Joohi Smita Sinha, Chief General Manager, Nageswara Varahabatla, General Manager, Network II, Sushil Kumar Singh, General Manager, Network I of SBI, Bengaluru Circle with other senior officials of the bank. The vehicle will be used to create awareness in prominent places of the city to help the public to be more vigilant and aware about the ongoing different patterns of cyber frauds. — BMB

Airlines cash in on Kumbh Mela fervour

Bengaluru to Prayagraj airfare higher than cost of flight tickets to Singapore, Bangkok, and Dubai

A large number of devotees arrive to take a holy dip at Triveni Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj on Tuesday

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As thousands from Bengaluru plan their journey to Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, to participate in the Kumbh Mela, they are facing a startling reality—airfare to Prayagraj has surpassed the cost of flights to international destinations like Singapore, Bangkok, and Dubai. For instance, on Tuesday, a flight ticket from Bengaluru to Prayagraj was priced at ₹27,533, while tickets to Singapore, Bangkok, and Dubai were significantly lower, at ₹9,543, ₹11,407, and ₹13,537, respectively.

A travel agent said that devotees eager to attend the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, are reeling from a sharp hike in airfares. Over the past 10-15 days, ticket prices have surged by 500-600% due to overwhelming demand, sparking outrage among travelers.

Airlines have reportedly increased fares from cities such as Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, and Delhi to Prayagraj by up to six times, with return tickets for February 26—the concluding day of the Maha Kumbh Mela—seeing a similar price surge. Organisations are demanding immediate intervention from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to curb the price hikes. It may be noted that Centre on Monday had asked airlines to increase the flights to Prayagraj.

DGCA intervention falls short

The DGCA had earlier directed airlines to maintain reasonable pricing. On January 23, it held a meeting with airline representatives to discuss fare regulation and approved 81 additional flights to Prayagraj, bringing the total to 132. Despite this, airlines have significantly inflated prices for single and round trips, ignoring the directives.

Fare deal

The fare hike has been most noticeable during special occasions such as Basant Panchami (February 3), Maghi Purnima (February 12), and Mahashivratri (February 26), when pilgrims travel in large numbers. With many planning short trips, return ticket prices for these dates have escalated dramatically. For instance, a one-way ticket from Bengaluru to Prayagraj for next week costs around ₹19,000, while the return fare is as high as ₹45,000. On January 29, a prominent airline was charging up to ₹62,447 for a single ticket. Return flights from Prayagraj in February are priced between ₹33,000 and ₹55,000, compared to the usual ₹6,800-₹7,000 in March.

Pilgrim protest

With an estimated 45 crore people expected to visit the Maha Kumbh Mela, including millions arriving daily, pilgrims are accusing airlines of exploiting the demand. Many travellers have expressed displeasure, claiming ticket prices have surged by 200-700% compared to normal rates, making it unaffordable for devotees.

Private universities won't conduct separate entrance tests for professional courses

Students aspiring to secure admissions to professional courses in private universities this year will no longer need to appear for separate entrance exams conducted by individual universities. However, those seeking seats in private universities must write either the CET (Common Entrance Test) or COMED-K exams.

Confirming this, Dr. MC Sudhakar, Higher Education Minister, said, "We advised private universities to discontinue their separate CETs to ease the burden on students. They have agreed, but it is not feasible to cancel COMED-K at this stage."

In previous years, private universities conducted their own entrance exams for professional courses, which increased the burden on students who had to appear for multiple tests. To address this concern, the state government held discussions with private universities, requesting them to discontinue separate entrance exams. Following this directive, private universities have agreed to drop their individual CETs. However, they have decided to consider scores from CET, COMED-K, and JEE for admissions.

Government seats in private universities will continue to be allotted through the CET. Over 20,000 seats in more than 150 engineering colleges will be filled through the COMED-K exam. As per the Karnataka Examination Authority, 45% of seats in private universities will be allocated through CET, while the remaining 55% will be filled based on COMED-K and JEE scores. There are 20 private universities in Karnataka. Starting this year, without a separate CET, these universities have decided to prioritise JEE scores for the allocation of 55% of their seats.

Exam Dates for 2025
CET: Scheduled for April 16 and 17
COMED-K: Scheduled for May 10

Burden reduced

Sukuanya Sanjay, a student, said, "Previously, we had to pay separate fees for each private university CET and travel to designated test centres, often in distant locations, for the exams. We also had to participate in multiple counseling processes, causing inconvenience to students and parents."

Dr. P. Shyamaraju, Chancellor, REVA University, said they were not conducting a separate entrance exam for engineering this year, following the government's directions. "However, this might pose challenges for admissions of out-of-state and international students." Dr. Jawahar Doreswamy, Pro-Chancellor, PES University added, "We have stopped conducting P-SAT from this year. Admissions will be based on CET, COMED-K, and JEE scores. Only students with top ranks will secure seats in our university." — BMB

Vehicle thefts crackdown: This motorcycle thief was on a joyride

CRIME FILES

55 stolen vehicles worth Rs 51 lakh seized across various police station limits

Police have apprehended a thief with an unusual motive -- he is said to have been stealing bikes just for the thrill. The Varthur police arrested Srinivas, who would wander the streets, seeking out old bikes to steal on a whim. His arrest is part of a larger crackdown by city police on vehicle theft. Officials have seized over 55 stolen vehicles worth Rs 51 lakh in separate cases.

Srinivas' arrest led to the recovery of 19 more stolen vehicles, totaling 20 bikes worth ₹15 lakh. He targeted old bikes, which lacked proper documents, with no intention of selling them. Instead, he would ride the stolen bike until it ran out of petrol, then abandon it. Afterwards, he would break the handlock of another nearby bike and flee the scene, leaving the stolen vehicle behind.

In another operation, Konanakunte Police apprehended a man in connection with the theft of a two-wheeler from Bannerghatta Main Road in November 2024.

The suspect, who had been active across multiple Bengaluru police stations, confessed to several thefts, leading to the recovery of eight stolen bikes, valued at ₹6 lakh.

Just days later, a man found with a stolen battery and two-wheeler, was arrested. The investigation unearthed his involvement in a string of thefts across the city, leading to the recovery of 17 vehicles and four batteries, totaling ₹14 lakh in value.

On January 15, police arrested a man near Veerasagara Road for stealing a two-wheeler from BHEL Layout in March 2023. The suspect, linked to multiple thefts across Bengaluru, confessed and led authorities to recover

nine more stolen vehicles.

Auto, 2-wheeler thefts

The Bagalagunte Police have successfully arrested an individual involved in the theft of auto rickshaws and a two-wheeler, with a total value of Rs 9 lakh, based on complaint filed by a resident of Jalahalli West, who reported that their auto rickshaw, parked in front of their house on the night of January 3, was stolen.

The accused admitted to stealing the auto rickshaw, as well as another auto rickshaw and a two-wheeler.

In a separate case, the Puttenahalli Police apprehended a man, following a complaint filed by residents of Doresani Palya regarding the theft of an auto rickshaw.

As police approached to question them, one suspect abandoned the vehicle and fled, while the second person was caught with the stolen auto rickshaw.

Upon interrogation, the arrested individual admitted to stealing the auto rickshaw and, in collaboration with the fleeing accomplice, had stolen another auto rickshaw as well.

Raids on houses of rowdies

In the last two weeks, the Central Crime Branch (CCB), through its Organized Crime Unit, conducted a series of raids targeting rowdy elements in various parts of the city.

A total of 75 houses in the eastern, northeastern, southeastern, and Whitefield divisions were searched in the early hours, as part of a crackdown on organised crime. Legal action was taken against seven during these operations.

A rowdy from DJ Halli, found in violation of a deportation order, was apprehended for residing in the city despite orders to move to Hindupur, Andhra Pradesh; a rowdy from Girinagar was arrested near Kengeri Metro Station under a non-bailable warrant.

Other arrests included individuals from Kodigehalli, Yelahanka New Town, Wilson Garden, and Annapurneshwari Nagar. **BMB**

Infosys co-founder, 17 others booked in SC/ST atrocity case

A complainant has alleged sustained harassment based on caste discrimination spanning from 2008 to 2025. The complainant, whose identity remains protected, accuses 18 individuals, including Infosys co-founder and former CEO Kris Gopalakrishnan and former IISc Director Balaram and others in the fields of academia and business subjecting them to verbal abuse and preventing their employment opportunities.

The court has been called to address the serious allegations, with a ruling expected in the coming months. The case has been registered under Prevention of SC/ST Atrocities Act on Monday. The case was registered at Sadashiva Nagar Police station based on directions of 71st city civil and session court (CCH).

The court's directive followed a complaint by a member of the Bovi community and a former faculty member at the Center for Sustainable Technology at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). The claim was that in 2014, the victim was wrongly accused in a honey trap case, which led to an unjust dismissal from service.

The case, which has caught significant attention, involves claims that the victim was faced with severe harassment and caste based discrimination.

The complaint further alleges that the harassment continued beyond his dismissal, with claims that efforts were made to blacklist him, preventing him from securing employment elsewhere in the country.

The complainant states that despite seeking justice through various avenues, including the Karnataka Legislative Assembly, they faced continued threats, harassment, and stigmatisation. A restraining order was reportedly issued by the court 15 times against the accused, but harassment persisted, it is said. **BMB**

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Trash takes over space around Metro station

Clogged drain, heaps of garbage dumped in vacant plot have messed up things in Thalagattapura

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Dirty water flowing around the vacant plot that has become a dumping ground in Thalagattapura has made life difficult for pedestrians

KAUSHIK JN

The residents of Thalaghattapura and Namma Metro commuters have been facing a lot of problems due to clogged drains and dumping of garbage near Namma Metro Station. The clogged drain and heaps of garbage have become a health hazard and eyesore for the residents and the Namma Metro commuters. With the authorities failing to take measures to remove silt and debris from the drain, dirty water is overflowing in the area, causing a lot of inconvenience to the pedestrians. The residents complain that the authorities concerned have failed to fix this problem despite several complaints.

Expressing concern over the unhygienic condition near the Metro station, Chaitanya Subramanya, a resident of the area, said that it is unfortunate that government agencies were not coming together to sort out an issue that is inconveniencing metro users, kids, senior citizens. "Pedestrians are struggling a lot to cope with bad odour. The unhygienic atmosphere around the Metro Station has become a nuisance. I hope the authorities take measures to fix this problem without any delay," said Subramanya.

Sympathising with pourakarmikas, Sudhakar PN, a resident, said the water is dirty and it is not safe for pourakarmikas to clean the drain. "The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited must install CCTV cameras near the spot that is being used to dump waste. It will help the authorities to penalise those dumping garbage. The BBMP authorities should keep a vigil on this spot to prevent people dumping garbage. I have myself seen some people carrying garbage on vehicles to this place," said Sudhakar.

He said the BBMP workers cleaned the spot on Tuesday morning but the condition of the roadside drain remains the same. "There is no guarantee that people will not dump garbage here again," he said.

Manjunath HV, a resident of Banashankari 6th Stage, said the vacant space near the Metro Station has become a permanent black spot. "It is not that the BBMP authorities are not cleaning it. The pourakarmikas clean the spot but garbage is being dumped here on a regular basis. It is causing inconvenience for Metro users. The authorities concerned must take measures to beautify the spot and engage BBMP Marshals to penalise those dumping garbage here," said Manjunath.

BBMP Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE) Chamaraj said that he would take measures to clear the garbage. "I will try to clear the silt and garbage from the roadside drain which is overflowing," the AEE said.

'Inevitable': Directive to submit report on drinking water tariff hike

It looks like the water tariff is set to be revised soon. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Tuesday that a directive has been issued to submit a report on increasing drinking water tariffs. He said that necessary action will be taken soon after receiving the report.

Shivakumar added that measures will also be implemented to regularise illegal water connections and maintain an accurate account of water supply and usage.

"Water tariffs in the city have not been revised for the past 11 years, resulting in an annual loss of ₹1,000 crore for the BWSSB. Electricity bills, which were ₹35 crore earlier, have now risen to ₹75 crore. Including other operational and manpower expenses, the total monthly loss stands at ₹85 crore," he explained.

He said revision of water tariffs was unavoidable. "The BWSSB has consulted city legislators and found that extending the water network further requires financial support, which banks are unwilling to provide, citing the Board's losses. Even financial institutions like JICA demand assurances on repayment before offering assistance," he added. He also criticised the previous government for halting the ₹20 crore subsidy allocated to slum dwellers for water connections and pledged to reinstate it. "Even when water is provided to the underprivileged, it must be accounted for. Everyone should contribute—even a token payment of one paisa per liter—so the government can track water usage. Many affluent individuals are exploiting provisions meant for slums," he remarked.

Preparations for the Summer

"Instructions have been given to ensure there are no drinking water shortages during the upcoming summer. Officials have also been directed to consider filling lakes to improve groundwater levels," said Shivakumar.

Other concerns

Addressing concerns about rising Metro ticket prices and potential water tariff hikes, Shivakumar said, "Our government has already reduced electricity tariffs. However, increases in fuel prices have impacted costs. Meanwhile, we've also approved a 10% salary hike and DA for employees. These measures were necessary to balance operations."

On the Tunnel Road plan, he said officials have been instructed to call for tenders worth ₹17,780 crore by the end of February. "The project, to be completed in two phases, will be finalized within three and a half years," he said, adding that funds will be sourced from BBMP, the state government, and financial institutions like Power Finance Corporation and HUDCO. "A tender process will determine which institution offers the lowest interest rates," he explained.

— BMB

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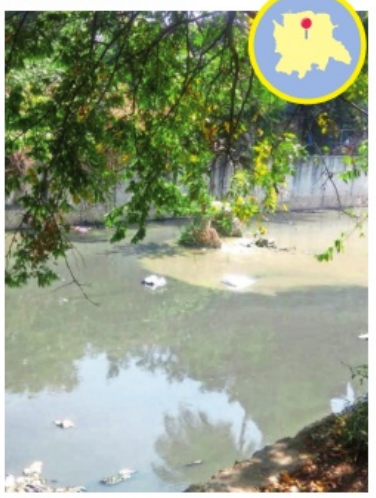
Sewage shocker

Doddanekundi



Untreated sewage from Doddanekundi is being discharged into the Marathahalli Rajakaluve, causing environmental concerns.

Dirt breakout

Shampura

There are recurring problems with the sewage line at 1st Main, 3rd Cross, Gandhinagar 2nd Stage, Shampura. Despite repeated complaints to BWSSB AE, who promised action, no one has come to address the issue.

Cable chaos

Cambridge Road

Telecom cables have been pulled out from the road, left exposed, and are now connected to a lamp post. This poses a danger, especially with two schools operating nearby. This is on Cambridge Road, in front of the main gate of Frank Anthony School. There has been no response from the authorities or telecom companies.

Tow to tango: Traffic police get busy clearing city of abandoned vehicles

Complaints about road obstructions and bottlenecks have been on the rise, prompting stricter enforcement measures

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In response to Bengaluru's growing traffic congestion, traffic police have intensified efforts to tackle abandoned vehicles and illegal parking on major roads. Public complaints about road obstructions and bottlenecks have been on the rise, prompting stricter enforcement measures.

To address the issue, traffic police are identifying vehicles causing obstructions, issuing notices to their owners, and towing them away if warnings are ignored. On Tuesday, a car parked on Queen's Road was towed after repeated notices went unanswered, highlighting the citywide crackdown.

Why are vehicles being abandoned?

The city has seen a significant rise in abandoned vehicles for several reasons. Many owners leave behind vehicles that are outdated or beyond repair, unable to decide on proper disposal methods. Vehicles involved in criminal activities, thefts, or accidents are often abandoned to avoid legal repercussions and some vehicles are simply forgotten by owners who acquire new ones, leaving the old ones to occupy road space for years.

Traffic police actions

If a vehicle is found parked in a no-parking zone or obstructing traffic, the police initially issue a notice urging the owner to move it within a stipulated time. In cases where the vehicle remains unmoved or the owner is untraceable, towing action is initiated. This ensures smoother traffic flow and addresses public grievances caused by unattended vehicles. The traffic officials are attaching notices to these vehicles and attempting to contact their owners. If there is no response after multiple warnings, the vehicles are towed to a designated dump yard. The vehicles are then presented in court for auction if owners fail to claim them.

> **"Many abandoned vehicles with duplicate plates are linked to crimes or accidents; offenders leave them to avoid detection**
>
> —Traffic official

Officials also reported an increase in vehicles with duplicate or fake number plates. "These cases are challenging as many abandoned vehicles with duplicate plates are linked to crimes or accidents, where offenders leave them behind to avoid detection," a senior traffic official told BM.

Public complaints

Residents and motorists have frequently complained about parked vehicles blocking narrow roads and causing congestion during peak hours. These efforts by the traffic police aim to curb these issues and ensure smoother vehicular movement, enhancing road safety and accessibility for the public.

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Woman held for chain snatching at temples

KS Layout police have arrested a woman and recovered 125 grams of gold worth Rs 9 lakh. The woman, along with four associates, targeted devotees at temples in Banashankari. The gang operated by snatching gold chains in crowded areas and passing them to accomplices who fled the scene.

Based on a recent case involving a 70-gram chain theft, police tracked the suspect to Salem, Tamil Nadu, and recovered the valuables from her friend's house, where they were hidden for safekeeping. Investigations are ongoing to identify other associates. —BMB

Irani gang busted, gold recovered

The Kodigehalli police have arrested six members of the notorious Irani gang involved in over 13 cases of house break-ins, robberies, and chain snatchings across the city. The accused, identified as Ali Siraj (51), Sadiq Ragfiq (40), Abbas Ali (27), Abu Turab (55), Tabrej Ali (35), and Madhush (45), were nabbed following a lead in a house theft case reported last March.

Police tracked one of the suspects to Chintamani Circle, whose confession led to the arrest of the others. They recovered 450 grams of gold valuables worth Rs 28.5 lakh. Investigations revealed the gang was responsible for five house break-ins in Kodigehalli and chain snatching incidents in areas including Bagaluru, Amruthahalli, Sanjay Nagar, RT Nagar, Whitefield, Kadugodi, and Varthur. —BMB

Hit-and-run leaves rider injured

In a late-night hit-and-run incident last week, a speeding car failed to stop during a routine vehicle check for drunk driving at Sahithya Kuta Junction, under the jurisdiction of Jalahalli Traffic Police Station.

The car struck a barricade set up for inspection and hit a two-wheeler rider, identified as Mohammed Sabuz, 30, who sustained minor injuries after falling along with his vehicle. The driver fled the scene without stopping.

The Jalahalli Traffic Police registered a complaint and formed two special teams to trace the vehicle. Using CCTV footage and inputs from the public, the vehicle was located on January 27. The driver, Srikanth S, 30, a resident of Vidyaranyapura, was arrested. The car was seized.

The police are now examining if the driver was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the incident. —BMB

Fire tragedy con: Couple, aide dupe realtor of Rs 5.7 crore

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) has arrested a couple and their accomplice for duping a city-based realtor of Rs 5.7 crore by luring him into a fake deal involving the Carlton Towers fire tragedy case. The accused, Rekha (38), a BSc graduate, her husband Manjunath Achari (40), an MBA and businessman, and their friend Chethan, a financial advisor, were apprehended after the realtor filed a complaint.

According to the police, the trio approached the realtor, who is a witness in the Carlton fire case, claiming that Rs 25 crore was being offered to witnesses to turn hostile. They struck a deal for Rs 6 crore, convincing him to pay Rs 5.7 crore in advance on the pretext of "releasing" the amount, which they claimed was frozen in a bank account by the Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax authorities. The realtor, persuaded by their scheme, handed over the money, after which the trio disappeared.

Following the complaint, the police tracked Rekha to a paying guest accommodation in Hoskote, Manjunath to his residence in Ayyappa Nagar, KR Puram, and Chethan to his hometown in Sakaleshpur. Investigations revealed that Rekha is a habitual offender who has cheated multiple victims by offering fake loans and investment opportunities. She was also involved in extorting Rs 31 lakh from a private firm employee by blackmailing him after chatting over the phone.

The CCB has taken all three accused into custody to investigate their criminal background and ascertain the extent of their fraudulent activities. Police also discovered that the accused had transacted ₹24 crore through a bank account over the last two years. Further investigations are underway. —BMB

3rd longest spell of NE Monsoon officially exits

The northeast monsoon, which lasted for nearly 3.5 months, marking the longest duration in 15 years and the third-longest since 1871, has officially withdrawn from Karnataka. However, rainfall is expected in several parts of Karnataka from February 1 to 3.

In an online post, blogger Pradeep John pointed out that previous northeast monsoons experienced delayed withdrawals in 1925 (January 30) and 1934 (January 28). Over the last 15 years, the monsoon season has typically extended into January, with the earliest withdrawal recorded on January 2, 2019. John also highlighted that in three of the last five years—2021, 2022, and 2025—the monsoon extended beyond January 14. The average onset of the northeast monsoon is around October 20, with an 8-day deviation, while its average withdrawal date is December 20, with a deviation of 14 days. In 2024, the monsoon began on October 15. —BMB

Conditional nod to Sharavathy project

In a meeting held on Tuesday, the Karnataka State Board for Wildlife has given conditional approval to the Sharavathy pumped-storage project.

In a closed-door meeting held to discuss the 2,000MW project by Karnataka Power Corporation Ltd, the Board gave it a green signal, subject to the fulfillment of some necessary conditions including minimal disturbance to the fragile ecosystem of Western Ghat and habitat of Lion-Tailed Macaques.

"Permission has been given with certain conditions. The project will now use 50 hectares in the forest area, instead of 54 hectares. The number of trees that were proposed to be felled has also been reduced to half," said a source from the Environment Ministry.

"Instead of nearly 15,000 trees as proposed in the project's DPR, a maximum of 8K trees will now be felled after certain modifications were suggested during the meeting," informed the source.. —BMB

Wings clipped: Parakeets become prime targets of illegal pet trade

Rescuers report birds most vulnerable during breeding season as poachers raid nests to capture chicks

Iffath Fathima
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Rose-ringed and Alexandrine parakeets, are frequently targeted for the illegal pet trade, causing immense suffering and leaving many birds unable to return to their natural habitats

Bengaluru's parks and gardens are home to vibrant parakeets that showcase the city's rich urban wildlife. However, experts warn that these intelligent and social birds face increasing exploitation during their breeding season, which runs from December to March. Two parakeet species, the Rose-ringed and Alexandrine parakeets, are frequently targeted for the illegal pet trade, causing immense suffering and leaving many birds unable to return to their natural habitats.

"Parakeets are among the most exploited species in the illegal wildlife trade. The breeding season is when they are at their most vulnerable. During this time, poachers raid nests to capture chicks. The young birds, often just beginning to explore their surroundings, are torn from their safe nest cavities and subjected to horrific conditions. Cramped spaces, inadequate food, and extreme stress are just a few of the challenges these birds face before being sold in the illegal pet market," said Subiksha Venkatesh, Lead Rehabilitator at Avian and Reptile Rehabilitation Center (ARRC).

Disoriented

Young parakeets venturing out of their nests for the first time also risk becoming disoriented in the chaos of the city. "Well-meaning citizens sometimes take these fledglings home, unaware of the specialised care they require. While their intentions are good, they often lack the knowledge and resources to care for these sensitive animals," Subiksha explained. This lack of proper care leads to malnourishment and stress, making rehabilitation at rescue centers a long and challenging process.

> **"Cramped spaces, inadequate food, and stress are a few challenges these birds face before being sold in illegal pet market**
> – Subiksha Venkatesh, ARRC

Despite being protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which prohibits keeping wildlife, including parakeets, as pets, many people unknowingly keep these birds at home.

"By the time people realise keeping parakeets is illegal, the birds have often spent years in captivity. Surrendering them to rescue centres is the right thing to do, but it's not an easy process. These birds, deeply bonded to their human caretakers, experience emotional and psychological stress when separated. Tragically, years in captivity rob them of the survival skills they need to thrive in the wild. Many never fully reintegrate into their natural environment," Subiksha said.

"Yet, keeping them at home is not an option either; it violates the law and perpetuates a cycle of captivity," she added.

Rehabilitation efforts

ARRC has been working to rescue and rehabilitate parakeets. Between 2022 and 2025, the organisation rescued 677 parakeets. Of these, 147 were confiscated from illegal captivity, while 530 were orphaned, displaced, or injured.

2023 saw the highest number of rescues, with 57 birds rescued from captivity and 179 found orphaned, displaced, or injured. "We do everything possible to enrich their lives with physical, mental, and social stimulation. However, no amount of care can replace the freedom and fulfillment they experience in the wild," Subiksha said.

Experts urge people to avoid keeping wild animals, including parakeets, as pets and if one comes across parakeets or other wildlife in distress, they should contact rescue centres or the forest department authorities. "By taking these steps, we can protect these magnificent birds. The future of India's parakeets depends on collective action. Let us choose coexistence over captivity and ensure these beautiful creatures continue to grace our skies for generations to come," she added.

Deadly cable menace strikes again

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"We have registered an FIR and issued notices to the cable companies involved. Investigations are currently underway to determine accountability and ensure such incidents are not repeated," said a senior traffic police official.

Inadequate action

This tragedy is not an isolated incident but part of a larger pattern of negligence involving unauthorised overhead cables across the city. While BBMP initiated a drive last year to remove hazardous cables, the impact has been inconsistent. For instance, in December, unauthorised cables were cleared along Old Airport Road and Marathahalli Bridge in the Mahadevapura zone. However, similar efforts are yet to be undertaken in other zones, leaving roads riddled with dangers for motorists and pedestrians.

Unattended cables, often left hanging across roads or lying on medians, pose a significant threat to commuters. Incidents of vehicles getting entangled with such cables have been reported across Bengaluru, yet follow up actions have been inadequate. The lack of sustained monitoring has allowed cables to reappear, posing a perpetual threat to commuters.

Parking regulatory mechanisms have failed in the past

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

push measures. Japan's 'proof-of-parking' is one of the push measures and is very much possible to implement in Bengaluru," said Professor Ashish Verma, convenor, Sustainable Transportation (IST) Lab, Indian Institute of Science (IISc). Notably, the number of private four and two-wheelers on city roads has been on a constant rise. In 2024, Bengaluru registered a 9% surge in private vehicle registration compared with 2023. Between January and December 2024, over 6.44 lakh private vehicles, including two-wheelers, cars, tractors, private service vehicles, etc were registered, in comparison to 5.90 lakh vehicles in 2023. Registration of private two-wheelers also went up by more than 13%.

Experts opine that Bengaluru needs such a parking policy with clear short-term and long-term plans.

The 'proof-of-parking' model does not require ownership of a parking space and permission to lease a parking space serves the purpose. For instance, if you are renting in a building with no parking facility, you are not prevented from buying a car. All you need to do is find a parking space to lease nearby and prove this to the jurisdictional police. There are bundles of such policies that can lead to a long-term and permanent solution to traffic congestion, say experts.

Parking regulation

Bengaluru, with the help of various rules, has been trying to regulate parking to ease congestion. However, most of them have yielded minimal results. In 2018, the Urban Development Department (UDD) came up with a draft parking policy, Management and Maintenance of Parking Rules, 2018. It was created to impose street parking fees in residential areas to prohibit parking on roads. The policy also included the rejection of building plans for residential complexes that do not provide parking spaces.

Under the policy, which was to come into effect in July 2019, fine amounts varying from Rs 200 to Rs 2,000 per day were proposed. Similarly, BBMP came up with a parking policy in 2012. In 2021, the state government approved Parking Policy 2.0 to ensure seamless movement of vehicles on roads. However, they all remain far from being implemented.

Interdepartmental coordination

Experts highlight that to successfully implement any such parking regulations, including Japan's model, an interdepartmental strategy involving agencies such as Bengaluru Traffic Police, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagra Palike, UDD, and the Transport Department is a must. However, the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA), which was proposed to regulate the operation, maintenance, development, and monitoring of urban mobility in Bengaluru, still stays on paper.

"BMLTA bill was brought in a couple of years ago but has not seen the light of the day. BMLTA was supposed to be an overarching planning authority to ensure that multiple agencies can work together seamlessly toward the development of sustainable urban mobility. However, it is yet to be constituted, leaving the city with a plethora of issues," said a mobility expert.

Pedestrian attacked, robbed by e-pickpockets

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In yet another incident of cyber-enabled street crime, a pedestrian was assaulted and robbed of Rs 24,000 by an auto driver and his accomplice near Nayandahalli Metro Station on Outer Ring Road late last week. The attackers, identified as Aleem (24) and Alam (28), lured the victim into a trap and forced him to transfer the money via a fraudulent QR code while threatening him with violence. The incident highlights the dangers of the tech-savvy criminal, who combines physical intimidation with digital deception.

According to the complaint, the complainant, Varun C, an assistant manager at a private company in Indira Nagar, left work on January 21 via the Metro. He got down at Mysore Road Metro Station around 7.45 pm. From there, he walked towards his home in Hoskerehalli, Banashankari 3rd Phase, along Nayandahalli Ring Road.

At around 8 pm, an auto rickshaw driving against the traffic approached him. The driver, along with an accomplice, began harassing him aggressively. Feeling unsafe, Varun attempted to distance himself, but the two men pursued him on foot.

The men caught up with Varun, shouting threats and intimidating him. What followed was even more alarming. The two assailants forced him into the auto-rickshaw. When he resisted and got out of the auto, they abused him and one of them allegedly hit him on his face, leaving him with serious injuries. The duo then snatched his phone, unlocked it, and accessed his UPI account to check the balance. After confirming the available amount, they slapped him again before scanning the QR code to transfer the money.

Auto driver, aide threaten, assault man; unlock his phone to transfer money via QR code payment app

The attackers forced Varun to unlock his phone and transfer Rs 24,000 to them via a QR code payment app. Despite his injuries, Varun eventually managed to escape and seek help from passersby. The assailants had threatened to kill him if he resisted or called for help, leaving him shaken and traumatised. After robbing him, they returned his phone and fled the scene.

Varun managed to reach a nearby traffic signal and contacted his father, who took him to a private hospital. He underwent surgery to treat multiple facial fractures and is now recovering.

The Byatarayanapura police have filed a case of robbery and are investigating the matter. Although Varun could not recall the auto rickshaw's registration number due to the trauma from the attack, the police are reviewing CCTV footage from the area to identify the perpetrators and now have arrested the duo from a nearby area.

Maintenance case can't be classified as extortion: HC

Husband legally obligated to comply with payment orders, says court, while also dismissing harassment case filed by wife

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The High Court has ruled that a woman filing maintenance proceedings against her husband and subsequent court-ordered maintenance payments cannot be classified as extortion. This judgement came whilst dismissing criminal cases filed by a couple against each other amidst their marital dispute.

Justice M Nagaprasanna clarified that maintenance petitions are legitimate legal proceedings, and the husband is legally obligated to comply with payment orders unless modified by a higher court. The court dismissed a case involving charges of extortion, cheating, and breach of trust filed by a 47-year-old man against his 42-year-old wife. The court stated that between spouses, maintenance-related matters cannot constitute cheating or criminal breach of trust under Sections 420 or 406 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), as there is no element of deception involved.

Additionally, the court dismissed the wife's harassment/domestic violence case against the husband, noting the absence of any elements supporting charges under Section 498A of the IPC. The court emphasised that allowing criminal proceedings against the husband would constitute misuse of legal processes and encourage contentious litigation tactics by the wife.

The husband had initiated criminal proceedings, claiming his wife had repeatedly extracted money from him and submitted false court affidavits to secure maintenance, allegedly collecting up to Rs 1 crore. The couple, married since 2007 with two children, experienced relationship deterioration in 2016 when the husband discovered his wife's alleged continuing relationship with a former boyfriend. She left their shared residence in 2020.

Subsequently, she demanded mutual consent divorce and child custody through legal notices, threatening criminal charges otherwise. Following failed mediation attempts, in 2023, she filed for divorce in family court, registered a dowry harassment case, and sought maintenance payments. After she began sharing complaint details on media platforms, the husband sought injunctive relief against her and media outlets, filed criminal charges for alleged extortion and cheating, and petitioned for child custody and conjugal rights restoration.

Death note clean chit not enough to quash dowry case

The High Court has determined that a death note absolving all responsibility cannot be the sole basis for dismissing proceedings against husband and in-laws in cases involving cruelty and dowry death charges.

Justice M Nagaprasanna issued this ruling whilst rejecting a petition by Vikas CV and others, who face charges under Sections 498A, 304B with Section 34 of the IPC and Sections 3 and 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961. The bench remarked, "It is rather unfortunate

> **Between spouses, maintenance-related matters cannot constitute cheating or criminal breach of trust** –HC bench observation

that the age-old menace of dowry death still exists in our society today. Though progression has happened on every front, the cases of this kind which project the menace of dowry death is regressive."

According to the prosecution, the marriage took place on October 24, 2019. The relationship deteriorated within months, and after 13 months, the complainant's daughter died by suicide. A complaint was registered on October 24, 2020, followed by police investigation and chargesheet.

The petitioners argued that the deceased's death note blamed no one but herself, and being financially stable, they had no reason to demand dowry. They sought proceedings to be quashed. The complainant countered that his daughter's suicide in the bathroom resulted from harassment for dowry. The prosecution maintained that despite the death note's contents, the circumstances leading to death required examination during trial.

Findings

Citing the Apex court judgment in Naresh Kumar v State of Haryana 2015, the bench rejected the petitioners' argument about the death note, stating they must prove their innocence in a full trial. Observing that the marriage lasted only one year, the court stated that the financial status of the accused requiring no dowry was a factual matter needing evidence. The court concluded that cases under Sections 498A and 304B of the IPC cannot be quashed merely based on a death note, as circumstances surrounding the suicide and the note require evidential examination.

IN BRIEF

Insurance case: 'Construction site must be considered public place'

The High Court ruled on Monday that construction sites, despite being private property, must be considered 'public places' under the Motor Vehicles Act due to their accessibility to various personnel including workers, managers and unloaders. This judgement was delivered by Justice Hanchate Sanjeev Kumar whilst dismissing an insurance company's appeal.

The incident with regard to the case occurred on November 14, 2011, when labourers were resting at a construction site on Begur-Koppa road in Bengaluru. A brick-laden truck, whilst reversing, fatally struck Devendra Eligar, one of the sleeping workers within the compound. The victim's family sought justice through the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal in Bengaluru. The tribunal granted Rs 11.5 lakh compensation with 6 per cent interest on February 7, 2014.

The insurance firm contested the ruling, arguing that their contractor's plant policy did not cover third-party risks. They also maintained that the incident occurred in a private construction area rather than a 'public place'.

While acknowledging the validity of the claim petition under section 166 of the Motor Vehicles Act, they disputed their liability for compensation. Justice Sanjeev Kumar observed construction areas, whilst privately owned, remain accessible to individuals including workmen, supervisors, managers, engineers, and those involved in loading and transportation activities. This accessibility continues until construction completion and exclusive private occupation commences. The court stated, "Here, these types of persons who are involved in the construction activities are part of the public, the site in which the accident occurred is not fully occupied for the private purpose of the construction site. Therefore, the said construction area is to be construed as a public place as per Section 2(34) of the MV Act. **BMB**

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Sd/-
RAVI .P, Advocate
KAR-1804/2007, 1st Floor, KRP Building, Paramanna Layout, Nelamangala Town-562 123
B.lore Rural Dist. M: 99725 77244

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Smt.Annapoornamma W/o Late. Lakshman, Aged about 56 years, Smt. Manjula.L D/o Late.Lakshman aged about 34 years, Sri. Siddaraju S/o Late.Lakshman, Aged about 33 years, all are residing at Shydamipalya Village, Huskur Post, Dasanapura Hobli, Bangalore North Taluk have cancelled the Specific power of attorney dated 31.12.2024 executed in favour of Sri. Yoghesh.H, registered vide document No. VJN-4-00361-2024-25, at the office of the Sub-Registrar Vijayanagara with respect to the land in Sy.No.9/2 measuring 7.04 guntas, situated at Bettangaere Village, Dasanapura Hobli, Bangalore North taluk by issuing the legal notice dated 10.01.2025 through our counsel and therefore we request the General public not to proceed/correspond with Sri. Yogesh with respect to the aforesaid land forthwith.

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I,FAMIDA W/o MOHAMED JAFFAR ABDUL KADHAR R/o No 41, Skanda Nilayam, CMR Layout Chelkere, Hennur Bande Banaswadi, Kalyananagar Bengaluru-560043. I have changed my name to FHAMETHA vide affidavit dated: 21/01/2025 Before Notary B M CHANDRASHEKAR Bangalore.

I, Yasmin Taj W/o G Muneer Ahmed Khan R/o 47,2n cross, Tippu Nagar Ramanagaram Karnataka-562159 have changed my name to Yasmeen Taj

I, Umesh Babu Reddy Dasratharam Reddy R/o No.61/149, Garden layout, Parangipalya, HSR layout, sector-2, Bengaluru 560102 have changed my name to Umesh Babu Reddy Affidavit Dt.28/01/2025 notary Harisha G, B'luru

I Amit Anand Naik S/O, Anand S Naik R/o Flat No Ta-101, Trendsquares Ortus-3, Laxmi Narayana Temple Road, Amrutahalli, Byatarayanapur Cmc, Bengaluru - 560092 have changed my name to Amit A Naik.

I,MOHAMED JAFFAR ABDUL KADHAR S/o ABDUL KADHAR R/o No 41, CMR Layout Chelkere, Kalyananagar, Bengaluru-560043. I have changed my name to MOHAMMED JAFFER A vide affidavit dated: 23/01/2025 Before Notary B M CHANDRASHEKAR Bangalore.

I, GEETHA SUBRAMANI KAKARLA S/o SUBRAMANI KAKARLA R/o Flat 003, Plot No 217, NSR Sarovar, Sarjapur Kudlu Village, Bengaluru-560068. I have changed my name to GEETHA SUBRAMANI R vide affidavit dated: 28/01/2025 Before Notary B M CHANDRASHEKAR Bangalore.

I, BABYAMMA JACOB W/o SHANMUGAM KUPPUSWAMY R/o No 1, 6th main road Palace Guttahalli near Mosque, Bangalore-560003. I have changed my name to ANNE SHANMUGAM vide affidavit dated: 18/01/2025 Before Notary B M CHANDRASHEKAR Bangalore.

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I, Bharati Tammani Kushappanavar W/o Tammanna R/o No.56, SBI Officers Colony, Basaveshwara Nagar, Bengaluru 560079 have changed my name to Bharati Kushappanavar Affidavit Dt.28/01/2025 notary Harisha G, B'luru

I, KM PINKY W/o PRASHANT KUMAR R/o No 535 AECS Layout B Block Singasandra Bengaluru-560068. I have changed my name to PINKY vide affidavit dated: 25/01/2025 Before Notary B M CHANDRASHEKAR Bangalore.

I Gori Heet Pratapbhai S/O, Pratap Laxmidas Gori R/o 64 & 65/108, Shreeji Pg ,bannerghatta Rd, Anthappa Layout, Phase 4, J. P. Nagar, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560076 have changed my name to Heet Pratap Gori.

I, Malini W/o Harish Balakrishnan R/o C103, Nitesh Forest Hills, Seegehalli, Kadugodi, Bengaluru 560067 have changed my name to Malini Kudva Affidavit Dt.28/07/2025 notary Harisha G, B'luru

I, Anusuya, W/o. Gyanappa Holiyachi, R/o. #4/5/74, Ward No. 01, Megalapete, Mudgal (Rural), Raichur-584125, have changed my name to DEVAMMA vide affidavit Dtd: 23/01/25 before Notary M. Rajendra, B'lore.

I, Ramanath Sundaresh R/o MB-503, Maple block, Golden grand Apts, Tumakuru road, Yeshwanthpur, Bengaluru 560022 have changed my name to Ramnath Sundaresan Affidavit Dt.28/01/2025 notary Harisha G, B'luru

I Supreetha L C S/o Channarayappa R/o # 142, Linganahalli Village, Konaghatta Post, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bengaluru Rural 561203. have changed my name to Supreeth L C for all purposes.

I, Sharmila Arokianathan W/o, Arokia Nathan S R/o 10 Bliss Apartment 1b, First Floor, 2nd Main, Kariyanapalya Karam Chand , Bangalore 560084. have changed my name to Sharmila D for all purposes.

I, Chand pasha Noor Ahmed S/o Noor Ahmed R/o #07 B M Road Vaderahalli Ramanagaram Karnataka-562159 have changed my name to Chand Pasha.

I, Falak Khan, R/at Flat No. S4 2nd Floor, Shivashankari Parls, 2nd Cross, Chikkala sandra Bengaluru-560061 have changed my name to Zaisha Khan, For All Purposes.

I, Harish S/o Ramakrishna R/o 528/2 2nd Floor Pipeline A Cross Appaji Road Yeshwanthpura B'luru 560022 have changed my name to Harish Ramakrishna Handady

I Jaishree Thapa d/o Dheerka raj Thapa R/o Malleshwaram, bangalore have changed my name from Jayashree Kumari Thapa D H to Jaishree Thapa for all future purposes

I Sarath Muraleedharan Nair S/O, Murali Nair R/o No 203 Hello World Infinity 2nd Cross Neeladri, Nagar Electronic City Phase 1, Bengaluru - 560100 have changed my name to Sarath Murali Nair.

I Anand Naik S/O, Shivappa R/o Flat No Ta-101, Trendsquares Ortus-3, Laxmi Narayana Temple Road, Amrutahalli, Byatarayanapur Cmc, Bengaluru - 560092 have changed my name to Anand S Naik.

I, Narapareddy Sreedhar, S/o. N V Narayana Reddy, R/o. No. 1539, 23rd A Cross, 4th Main, HSR L/o, Sector-7, Blr-102, have changed my name to NARAPAREDDY SREEDHAR REDDY vide affidavit Dtd: 28/01/25 before Notary M. Rajendra, B'lore.

I ASHISH S/o. ANIL MURUMKAR R/o Flat No 7A408, Vaishnavi Serene Apt, Doddaballapur Main Road, Puttenahalli, Yelahanka, Bengaluru 560064 has changed my to ASHISH A MURUMKAR vide Affidavit dated 28/01/2025 before Notary G.P.CHAYA. Bengaluru

I, Ambikanath Huruhihakkalu Shankara Bhat R/o. Archita Aithal Aarohi F No. 202 Opp Janakshi School, R R Nagar, Bengaluru-560098 have changed my name to AMBIKANATH HURALIHAKKLU SHANKARA BHAT vide Affidavit dt. 25.01.2025 sworn before notary Mr. C Srinivas Bengaluru

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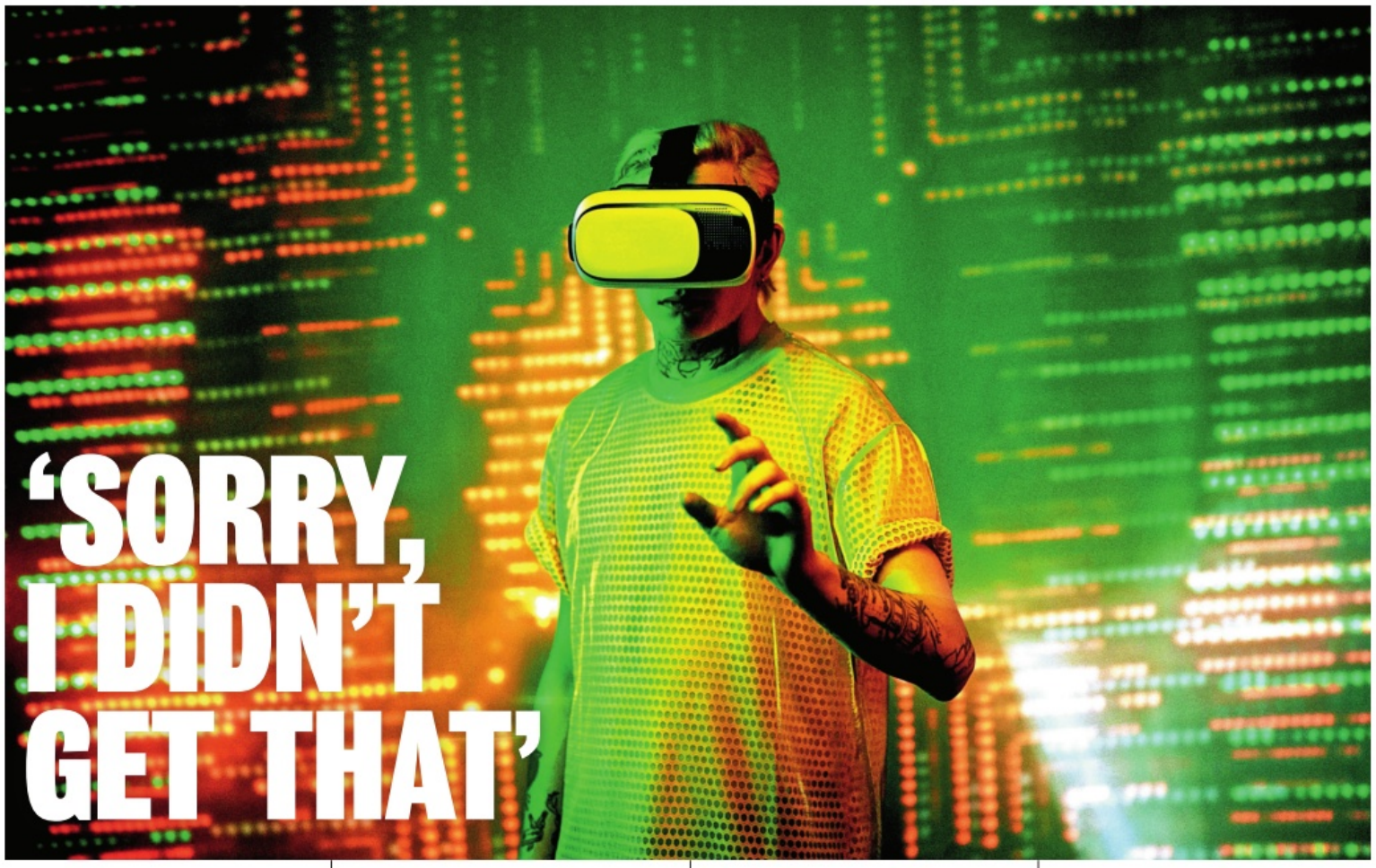

'SORRY, I DIDN'T GET THAT'

AI misunderstands some people's words more than others

The idea of a humanlike artificial intelligence assistant that you can speak with has been alive in many people's imaginations since the release of "Her," Spike Jonze's 2013 film about a man who falls in love with a Siri-like AI named Samantha. Over the course of the film, the protagonist grapples with the ways in which Samantha, real as she may seem, is not and never will be human.

Twelve years on, this is no longer the stuff of science fiction. Generative AI tools like ChatGPT and digital assistants like Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa help people get driving directions, make grocery lists, and plenty else. But just like Samantha, automatic speech recognition systems still cannot do everything that a human listener can.

You have probably had the frustrating experience of calling your bank or utility company and needing to repeat yourself so that the digital customer service bot on the other line can understand you. Maybe you've dictated a note on your phone, only to spend time editing garbled words.

Linguistics and computer science researchers have shown that these systems work worse for some people than for others. They tend to make more errors if you have a non-native or a regional accent, are Black, speak in African American Vernacular English, code-switch, if you are a woman, are old, are too young or have a speech impediment.

Tin ear

Unlike you or me, automatic speech recognition systems are not what researchers call "sympathetic listeners." Instead of trying to understand you by taking in other useful clues like intonation or facial gestures, they simply give up. Or they take a probabilistic guess, a move that can sometimes result in an error.

As companies and public agencies increasingly adopt automatic speech recognition tools in order to cut costs, people have little choice but to interact with them. But the more that these systems come into use in critical fields, ranging from emergency first responders and health care to education and law enforcement, the more likely there will be grave consequences when they fail to recognize what people say.

Imagine sometime in the near future you've been hurt in a car crash. You dial 911 to call for help, but instead of being connected to a human dispatcher, you get a bot that's designed to weed out nonemergency calls. It takes you several rounds to be understood, wasting time and raising your anxiety level at the worst moment.

What causes this kind of error to occur? Some of the inequalities that result from these systems are baked into the reams of linguistic data that developers use to build large language models. Developers train artificial intelligence systems to understand and mimic human language by feeding them vast quantities of text and audio files containing real human speech. But whose speech are they feeding them?

If a system scores high accuracy rates when speaking with affluent white Americans in their mid-30s, it is reasonable to guess that it was trained using plenty of audio recordings of people who fit this profile.

With rigorous data collection from a diverse range of sources, AI developers could reduce these errors. But to build AI systems that can understand the infinite variations in human speech arising from things like gender, age, race, first vs. second language, socioeconomic status, ability and plenty else, requires significant resources and time.

'Proper' English

For people who do not speak English – which is to say, most people around the world – the challenges are even greater. Most of the world's largest generative AI systems were built in English, and they work far better in English than in any other language. On paper, AI has lots of civic potential for translation and increasing people's access to information in different languages, but for now, most languages have a smaller digital footprint, making it difficult for them to power large language models.

Even within languages well-served by large language models, like English and Spanish, your experience varies depending on which dialect of the language you speak.

Right now, most speech recognition systems and generative AI chatbots reflect the linguistic biases of the datasets they are trained on. They echo prescriptive, sometimes prejudiced notions of "correctness" in speech.

In fact, AI has been proved to "flatten" linguistic diversity. There are now AI startup companies that offer to erase the accents of their users, drawing on the assumption that their primary clientele would be customer service providers with call centers in foreign countries like India or the Philippines. The offering perpetuates the notion that some accents are less valid than others.

Human connection

AI will presumably get better at processing language, accounting for variables like accents, code-switching and the like. In the U.S., public services are obligated under federal law to guarantee equitable access to services regardless of what language a person speaks. But it is not clear whether that alone will be enough incentive for the tech industry to move toward eliminating linguistic inequities.

Many people might prefer to talk to a real person when asking questions about a bill or medical issue, or at least to have the ability to opt out of interacting with automated systems when seeking key services. That is not to say that miscommunication never happens in interpersonal communication, but when you speak to a real person, they are primed to be a sympathetic listener.

With AI, at least for now, it either works or it doesn't. If the system can process what you say, you are good to go. If it cannot, the onus is on you to make yourself understood.

(Roberto Rey Agudo, Dartmouth College, The Conversation)

All you need to know about...

Tips to sleep

Nagging worry
A common challenge shared by many, sleep anxiety manifests as a nagging worry or unease about slipping into slumber and maintaining it. "It's like your mind is racing with thoughts, making it hard to relax and drift off into dreamland," says Archana Singhal, counsellor and therapist. "For instance, stressors from work or school, concerns about life events, or even unexplained nervousness," explains our expert. "Additionally, factors such as excessive caffeine consumption, screen usage before bedtime, or an irregular sleep schedule can contribute to sleep anxiety."

Stick To A Bedtime Routine: Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. This helps regulate your body's internal clock.

Create A Relaxing Bedtime Environment: Make your bedroom a cosy and comfortable space for sleep. Dim the lights, turn off screens, and try calming activities like reading or listening to soothing music before bed.

Limit Caffeine And Screen Time: Avoid drinking caffeinated beverages like coffee or tea in the afternoon and evening, and try to avoid screens like phones, tablets, and computers at least an hour before bed.

Practice Relaxation Techniques: Deep breathing, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation can help calm your mind and body before bed. The best way is to try different relaxation techniques to find what works best for you.

Seek Professional Help If Needed: If sleep anxiety is severely impacting your daily life, don't hesitate to reach out to a counsellor or therapist for support and guidance. They can help you explore underlying causes and develop personalised strategies to manage sleep anxiety effectively. —Femina

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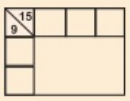
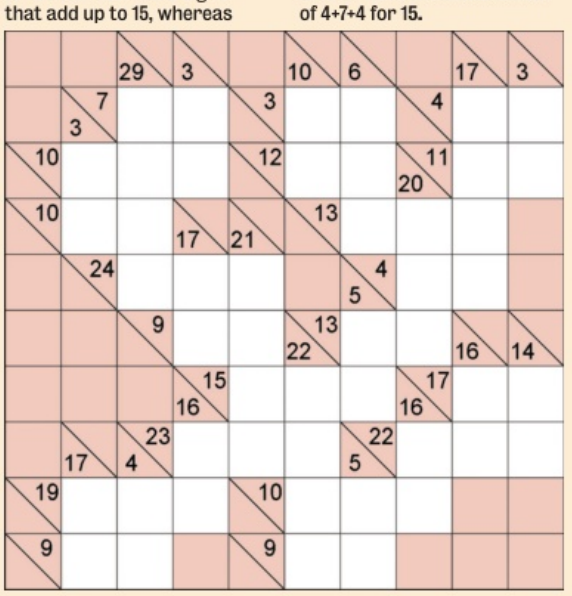
Kakuro

The numbers in the grey squares refer to the sums of the digits that you must fill into the empty spaces directly below or to the right of the grey square containing the number. For instance, in the given example, the 3 boxes horizontally next to 15 must contain 3 digits that add up to 15, whereas

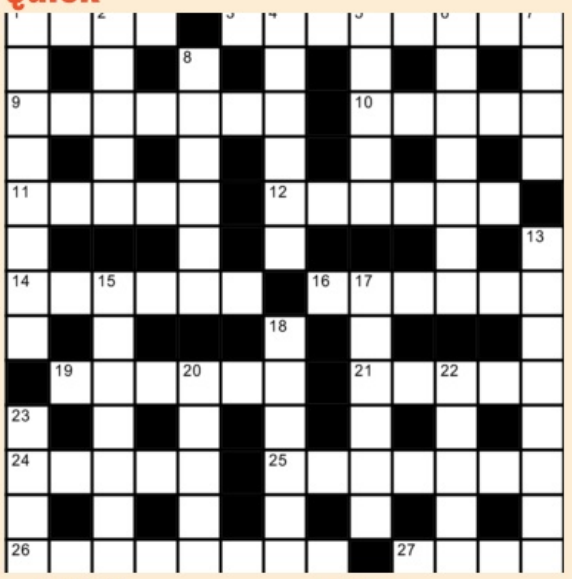


for 9, it is the 2 boxes placed vertically under it that must add up to 9. No zeros are used here, only the digits 1 through 9.

Note: A digit cannot appear more than once in any particular digit combination. For instance, in the example, we cannot have the combination of 4+7+4 for 15.



Quick



ACROSS

1 Spanish home (4)
3 Mishap, road crash (8)
9 Tattered (7)
10 Foolish one (5)
11 Ex-Windies skipper Jimmy ___ (5)
12 Plant with various brightly coloured flowers (6)
14 ___ out : indicates, draws attention to? (6)
16 ___ City: Bangalore of course (6)
19 Royal seat (6)
21 Ruminant mammal of South America (5)
24 Accused or identified (5)
25 Tidal wave (7)
26 Young maiden or miss in Spanish (8)
27 A large mass of ice (4)

DOWN

1 Field Marshal K.M. ___ : first Indian C-in-C of Indian Army? (8)
2 Greek letter `S' (5)
4 Former name of Sri Lanka (6)
5 Of the upper hipbone (5)
6 Uplifted, being deified (7)
7 Pull or lug with hand (4)
8 China shop purchase (3,3)
13 Captivating (8)
15 Unfeelingly cruel (7)
17 With maximum effort? (3,3)
18 Six-line stanza (6)
20 Stranger (5)
22 Conscious of (5)
23 Burden of responsibility (4)

Quoteuncode

This puzzle is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that Q equals C, it will equal C throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Today's CLUE: V EQUALS C

ECL VFD'Q BKD LDMRNN ECL MRFGD JCB QC MCNR.

Linemaro

You are like a breath of fresh air

Mindchow

The greatest weariness comes from work not done

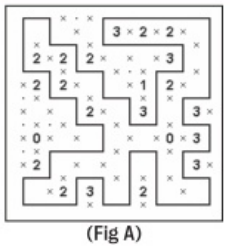
Joke of the day

What colour is someone's aura when they are about to die? Cyan aura

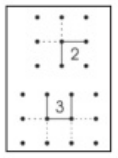
Loop

Rules

» Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A). » Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B). » Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines. » You can't draw lines around zeros. » Each puzzle has just one unique solution.



(Fig A)

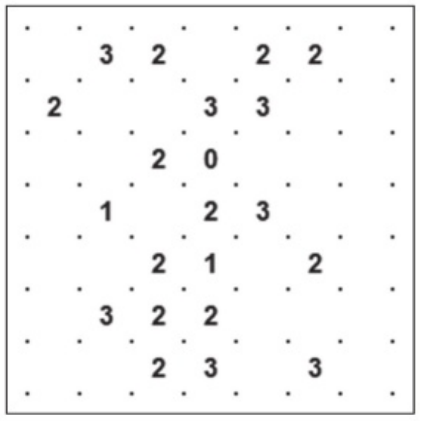


(Fig B) Not Allowed

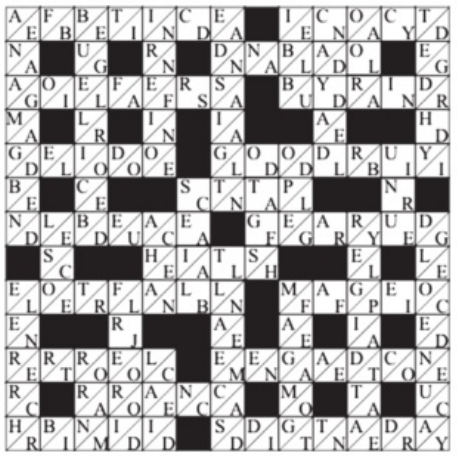
How to begin:

Example (Fig A) – Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a dead-end (Fig B)



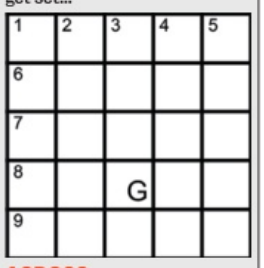
Strikeout



This crossword has no clues and the answer is there waiting for you. All you have to do is find it in each square. You have a choice of two letters, one of which you must strike out. If you choose correctly, you will be left with a grid that contains real words.

Fast five

How long do you think it will take you to unscramble the ten words shown below and fit them correctly into the grid in the order given one letter has already been entered to get you started? on your marks, get set...



ACROSS

1 Creon; 6 Ex Doe;
7 Wrest; 8 Gator;
9 Swain

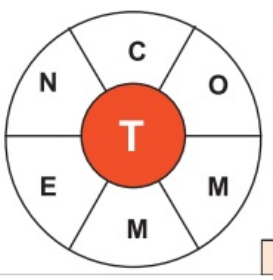
DOWN

1 Wears; 2 Taxer;
3 Co rig; 4 No doe;
5 News T

Mensapuzzle

Which number replaces the question mark and completes the puzzle?

Bull's eye



How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown? Every word must contain the central letter. There should be one seven-letter word. British English Dictionary is used as a reference.

05 Average; 06 Good; 08 Outstanding

SudokuChallenge

			7		3			
2	8						1	7
	4	1				6	3	
5	2			7			9	8
			4		9			
9	1			8			6	3
	3	5				8	2	
8	6						7	5
			8		5			

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from one to nine must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Gofigure

Place the four numbers in the first, third, fifth, and seventh boxes and whatever operators you care to use in the second, fourth, and sixth boxes in the correct order to get the answer. Use the numbers only once.

Easy = 4
2 5 8 9

Medium = 22
8 7 4 3

Hard = 20
2 4 8 2

Hocusfocus

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Arm is longer. 2. Name tag is smaller. 3. Mouth is different. 4. Pocket is missing. 5. Balloon is missing. 6. Vest is shorter.

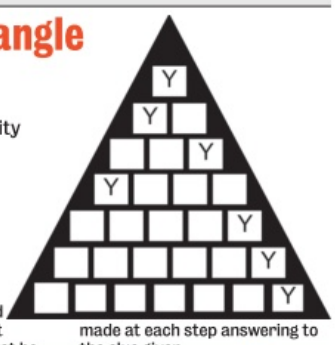
Riddler

Six words have had their trees removed. The trees have been placed into Group A. The remaining letters of each word have been placed into Group B. Your task is to reconstitute the words by merging each tree with the proper set of letters. Other than merging the two groups together, there is no rearranging of the letters. Example: sand + pne = spanned (SpANneD).

Group A: cedar, elm, maple, pine, spruce, willow;
Group B: bda, dfer, inniy, iplab, mionon, sltr

Alpha triangle

1 Youth leader!
2 Yes, slang
3 ___it on: flatter
4 American university
5 Awry
6 A ship's kitchen
7 Lawfully

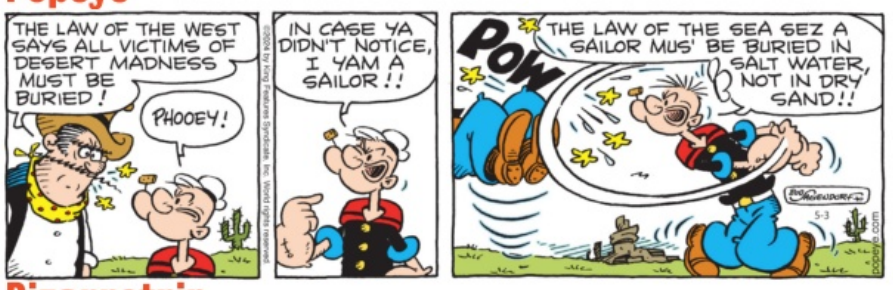


Beginning at the top move towards the bottom seven-letter word by adding a letter at each step and rearranging. A correct and different word must be made at each step answering to the clue given.

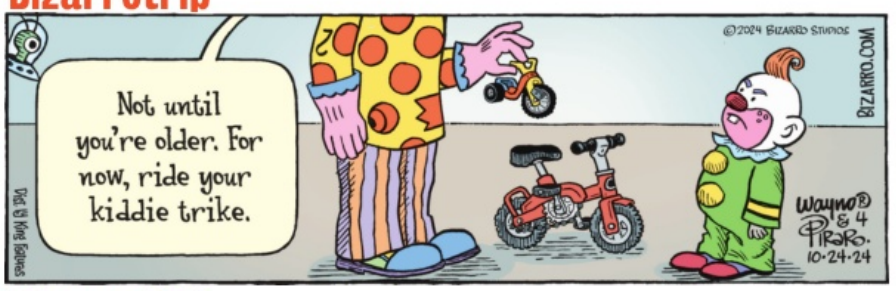
DIFFICULT TO SOLVE? FIND THESE SOLUTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE

COMICS

Popeye


THE LAW OF THE WEST SAYS ALL VICTIMS OF DESERT MADNESS MUST BE BURIED!
PHOOEY!
IN CASE YA DIDN'T NOTICE, I YAM A SAILOR!!
POW
THE LAW OF THE SEA SEZ A SAILOR MUS' BE BURIED IN SALT WATER, NOT IN DRY SAND!!

Bizarrotrip


Not until you're older. For now, ride your kiddie trike.
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Wayno & PIRRO 10-24-24
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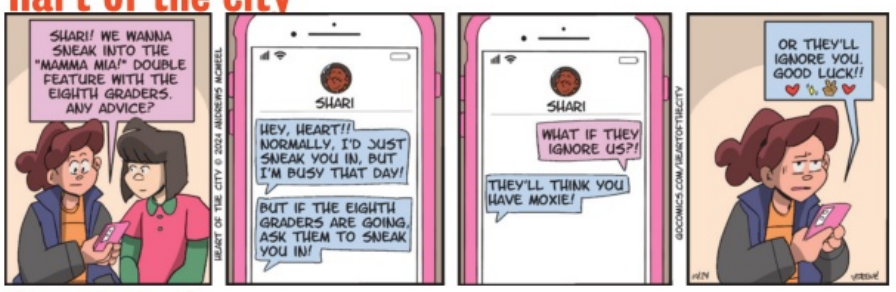
Diamond Lil

Hart of the city


SHARI! WE WANNA SNEAK INTO THE "MAMMA MIA!" DOUBLE FEATURE WITH THE EIGHTH GRADERS. ANY ADVICE?
SHARI
HEY, HEART!! NORMALLY, I'D JUST SNEAK YOU IN, BUT I'M BUSY THAT DAY!
BUT IF THE EIGHTH GRADERS ARE GOING, ASK THEM TO SNEAK YOU IN!
SHARI
WHAT IF THEY IGNORE US?!
THEY'LL THINK YOU HAVE MOXIE!
OR THEY'LL IGNORE YOU. GOOD LUCK!!
HART OF THE CITY © 2024 ANDREWS MCMEEL
@GOCOMICS.COM/HEARTOFTHECITY

Crankshaft

I'D SIT, BUT THERE ARE NO BOX SEATS.
THIS IS LIKE THE NIGHT WHEN MARY SHELLEY AND HER FRIENDS WERE SITTING BY FLICKERING CANDLELIGHT AS A THUNDERSTORM RAGED OUTSIDE...
PIZZA
10-24
AND LORD BYRON CHALLENGED EACH OF THEM TO WRITE A GHOST STORY!
WE SHOULD DO THAT!
AND EACH STORY SHOULD INCLUDE THE PIZZA MONSTER!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE A SILENT PARTNER...
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BATIOR & DAVIS

Mutts

WHAT YOUR STARS SAY TODAY

Aries Mar 21 – Apr 20
Today, you may be blessed by the Moon. Your hard work could lead to a higher position or recognition. Professional performance is likely to improve, and you might meet an influential person who provides valuable guidance. Domestic issues can be resolved effortlessly, enhancing harmony at home.

Taurus Apr 21 – May 20
You may feel happy and content today, with noticeable improvements in various aspects of life. A visit to a religious place may provide inner strength. Donations to charity or a spiritual organisation could bring you peace. Expect good news regarding education or work. Couples might find their perfect match, and singles may encounter a soulmate.

Gemini May 21 – Jun 21
Positive vibrations surround you today, bringing things under control. You might plan a new business venture in partnership or anticipate long-distance travel. Trust and understanding with your spouse will deepen, bringing harmony to your domestic life.

Cancer Jun 22 – July 23
You may feel dull and unhappy today, affecting your productivity and causing delays in projects. This could impact your reputation in both professional and personal life. Avoid adventurous activities or rash driving. Lovebirds might face relationship challenges, and job seekers could experience setbacks in finding new opportunities.

Leo Jul 24 – Aug 23
Today, you will be busy with work, and your network is likely to expand. Through these connections, you may secure a significant business order. Innovative ideas may flourish in partnerships, and new investments could strengthen your business's future growth. Emotional bonding with your spouse will improve, adding positivity to your personal life

Virgo Aug 24 – Sep 23
You will perform exceptionally well at work today. A strong bond with your boss could result in new responsibilities or a promotion. Chronic health issues may improve, and you might receive good incentives for your efforts. Disputes with siblings are likely to be resolved, and job seekers may find new opportunities.

Libra Sep 24 – Oct 22
Your children's education might keep you occupied today, and you may plan for their higher studies. Couples could receive good news related to their children. You may consider upgrading your skills or pursuing higher education to secure a promotion. Singles might meet their soulmates. Professionals in education, consultancy, and banking are likely to thrive.

Scorpio Oct 23 – Nov 22
You may feel dissatisfied and unable to fulfill your responsibilities effectively. Investments might lead to some losses, so it's important to carefully review documents before signing. Health concerns for elders in the family might cause worry. Consider postponing home renovations or reconstruction plans.

Sagittarius Nov 23 – Dec 22
Spending time with family will bring joy today. New sources of income could improve your financial situation, and you'll likely control unnecessary expenses. Any purchases today will add value to your lifestyle and enhance your social status.

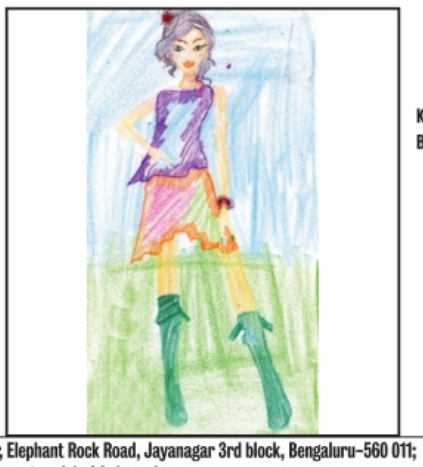
Capricorn Dec 23 – Jan 20
Blessings from elders may help you stay patient and focused. This focus will enable you to achieve your goals in business and domestic matters. A balance between expenses and savings will strengthen your finances and increase your savings.

Aquarius Jan 21 – Feb 19
Your inner strength will bring happiness today. Short-term gains from investments are possible. You might build better relationships with your boss, which could lead to a promotion. Your social prestige may rise, and work-related travel opportunities could arise.

Pisces Feb 20 – Mar 20
Dissatisfaction and lethargy might dominate your day, slowing down your work and causing delays in projects. Lovebirds are advised to postpone decisions regarding marriage. Job seekers may face disappointment in interviews or job searches.

KIDZONE

Adiya Pai, Bengaluru



Kanisha Bengaluru

Kidzone, Bangalore Mirror, No. 74/2, Sanjana Plaza, 4th & 5th Floor, Elephant Rock Road, Jayanagar 3rd block, Bengaluru-560 011;
Please send hard copies of your artwork in A4 size only.

SOLUTIONS

RIDDLER
cedar + inny = incendiary (inCEnDIARy); elm + bda = bedlam (bEdLaM): maple + iplab = impalpable (iMpAlPabLE); pine + sltr = splinter (sPlINtEr); spruce + mionon = misPRonOunCE); willow + dfer = wildflower (WiLdfLOWer)

BULL'S EYE
cent, comet, COMMENT, moment, mote, note, tome, tone

STRIKE OUT

H	I	N	D	I	S	I	G	N	A	R	Y			
C	A	R	E	C	A	O	T	C						
N	U	R	S	E	R	O	L	E						
G	O	L	F	E	R	S	B	Y	A	N	D			
A	L	N	I	E	E	D								
G	L	I	D	E	G	O	O	D	B	U	Y			
E	E	S	N	A	P	R								
D	E	D	U	C	E	F	E	A	R	E	D			
E	C	H	A	L	S	E	E							
L	E	F	A	L	L	M	A	G	I	C				
E	J	A	A	A	E									
T	H	R	O	N	E	L	L	A	M	A				
O	U	D	S	O	W	G								
P	O	I	N	T	S	G	A	R	D	E	N			
P	E	N	S	L	E	A	R	E	D					
A	D	A	M	S	O	R	C	H	I	D	E			
I	M	A	L	A	F	E								
R	A	G	E	D	Y	I	D	I	O	T				
A	I	T	E	L	D	O								
C	A	S	A	C	I	D	E	N	T					
S	E	N	O	R	I	T	A	B	E	R	G			

FAST FIVE

R	E	C	O	N
E	X	O	D	E
S	T	R	E	W
A	R	G	O	T
W	A	I	N	S

QUICK
22. Working from left to right, add numbers in the first two boxes together, and subtract 4, to give the next value along.

QUOTE UNCODE
You can't win unless you learn how to lose.

SOLVE IN 1M
0.04 = 4/100 = 1/25
(1/25)^-1.5 = 25^5 = 125

MENSA PUZZLE

6	5	9	7	1	3	2	8	4
2	8	3	9	4	6	5	1	7
7	4	1	2	5	8	6	3	9
5	2	6	3	7	1	4	9	8
3	7	8	4	6	9	1	5	2
9	1	4	5	8	2	7	6	3
4	3	5	6	9	7	8	2	1
8	6	2	1	3	4	9	7	5
1	9	7	8	2	5	3	4	6

SUDOKU

ALPHA TRIANGLE
Y, Ya, Lay, Yale, Ageley, Galley, Legally.

GO FIGURE
Easy
9 + 5 – 8 – 2 = 4
Medium
4 x 8 – 3 – 7 = 22
Hard
4 + 8 – 2 x 2 = 20

LOOP

KAKURO

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Out of the race

Samantha tells ETimes she will only be part of projects she truly believes in

Over the years, Samantha Ruth Prabhu has worked tirelessly across genres and built a name for herself. However, recently it has been noticed that the actress has turned picky when it comes to selecting her characters and projects.

Addressing the same, in an exclusive conversation with ETimes, the actress confessed, "I have taken myself out of the race."

"I think I only want to be a part of passion projects, projects that I truly, truly believe in. I know that there was a point in time where if I didn't have, like, three movies releasing in a year, I would feel like I'm a failure But I do believe that I have taken myself out of the race and only if I feel absolutely passionate about something and it gives me sleepless nights worrying how I'm going to crack this role, how I'm going to take this challenge up, only then will I get involved with a film project," she explained.

When asked if screen exposure and remuneration sometimes make it hard for the actress to resist a project, she elaborated, "Unless it's giving me sleepless nights, I'm not going to do a film or any role for that matter, be it in films or in business or anything for that matter, unless I'm extremely passionate about it,"

—Subhash K Jha, ETimes

No strings attached

Sanya Malhotra is all set to showcase her acting skills in the upcoming film 'Mrs', which is set to premiere on the OTT platform on February 7, 2025. Directed by Aarti Kadav, this film is an official remake of the acclaimed Malayalam movie 'The Great Indian Kitchen' (2021). The story revolves around Richa, a trained dancer and a teacher, whose life dramatically changes after marriage.

Sanya has garnered accolades for her role in this film, winning the Best Actress award at the 2024 New York Indian Film Festival for her outstanding performance.

In a recent interview with HT City, Sanya opened up about her personal life and whether she plans to become a 'Mrs' anytime soon. She humorously responded, "Nahi, I don't have the time to," indicating that her busy work schedule leaves little room for personal commitments.

A few weeks ago, Sanya and sitarist Rishab Rikhiram Sharma sparked dating rumours after photos of them together went viral. A Reddit user shared images showing the duo at the same event. Talking about if any 'strings' came to her mind when she was questioned about marriage, she laughed and clarified, "No, no. I'm actually quite busy with work. I don't have time to take leaves (Mere paas chhuti lene ka time nahi hai)."

— ETimes

SANDALWOOD SHOTS

Y MAHESWARA REDDY

Time traveller

The much-awaited and delayed Prajwal Devaraj-Vedhika starrer Gana is set to be screened at around 200 screens across Karnataka on January 31.

The movie went on floors on January 31, 2021, and is being released on the same date after four years. It is said the movie is set against the backdrop of two periods – 1993 and 2022.

"I am basically a software engineer and have bankrolled a Telugu movie a few years ago. The shooting of Gana began four years ago and its shooting was wrapped up in 75 days in and around Mysuru and Bengaluru. We did not compromise with the quality of the movie. It is a time traveler and it has all the ingredients required to entertain the audiences, especially mass audiences," said Parthu.

The movie is bankrolled by Parthu, who hails from Hyderabad, under the Cherry Creations banner. "It is my maiden movie in Sandalwood. It is like a bridge between 1993 and 2022. There were no mobile phones in 1993. I will bankroll more movies if I earn profit from this movie," he said.

Hariprasad Jakka, who worked as associate for director Sukumar, has handled the megaphone for Gana, his debut as director in Sandalwood. Jakka, a physics teacher, has directed Telugu movies Darshakudu and Playback.

Gana has four songs. Anoop Seline has composed music while Jai Anand has orked as cinematographer.

Sudeep's support

The team members of Thayavva were very happy when actor-cum-director Sudeep unveiled the movie's audio at GT World Mall recently. Sudeep has acted in a movie with a similar title - Thayavva that was released in 1997.

"I got the opportunity to act in the movie Thayavva when I completed graduation. I played a key role in that movie. I learnt a lot during the shooting of that movie. That remains memorable for me. I am happy to know that one more movie with a similar title is in the making. I wish good luck to the cast and crew of this movie," said Sudeep.

Geetha Priya plays the lead in the new Thayavva and also sung the songs. The team of Thayavva has completed most of the post-production works. "The movie is set against the backdrop of a village. It conveys a message to society on the importance of saving girls and encouraging and supporting them to become self reliant. We have selected the same title – Thayavva – of the movie in which Sudeep played a key role. I am grateful to Sudeep for gracing the audio launch. We are planning to release the movie as early as possible," said Geetha Priya.

Former Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce president Ba Ma Harish established an audio company in his name – Ba Ma Harish Audio – and bought the audio rights of Thayavva.

MaAx Super Speciality Hospital

RMR Road, Park Extension, Shivamogga, Karnataka-577201

Recruitment Notification

MaAx Super Speciality Hospital, Shivamogga.
Renowned Super Speciality Hospital in Malnad Region,
invites applications for the following Consultants :

DEPARTMENT	QUALIFICATIONS	NO OF POSITIONS	EXPERIENCE
EMERGENCY MEDICINE	MD (EMERGENCY MEDICINE)	4	1-2 YEARS
ANAESTHESIA	MD (ANAESTHESIA)	5	MIN 3 YEARS
PAEDIATRICS	MD (PAEDIATRICS)	4	1-2 YEARS
RADIOLOGY	MD (RADIOLOGY)	3	MIN 3 YEARS
OBG	MD (OBG)	3	MIN 3 YEARS
PULMONOLOGY (TB & CHEST)	MD (TB & CHEST)	2	1-2 YEARS
CARDIOLOGY	DM CARDIOLOGY	3	MIN 3 YEARS
NEPHROLOGY	DM NEPHROLOGY	2	MIN 3 YEARS
ENDOCRINOLOGY	DM ENDOCRINOLOGY	1	MIN 3 YEARS
NEUROLOGY	DM NEUROLOGY	2	MIN 3 YEARS
Mch NEUROSURGERY	Mch NEUROSURGERY	2	MIN 3 YEARS
PAEDIATRICS SURGERY	Mch/ DNB (PEDIATRIC SURGERY)	1	MIN 3 YEARS
MEDICAL ONCOLOGY	DM (ONCOLOGY)	1	MIN 3 YEARS
SURGICAL ONCOLOGY	Mch / DNB (SURGICAL ONCOLOGY)	1	MIN 3 YEARS
MEDICAL GASTROENTEROLOGY	DM GASTROENTEROLOGY	1	MIN 3 YEARS
SURGICAL GASTROENTEROLOGY	Mch / DNB SURGICAL - GASTRO	1	MIN 3 YEARS
PSYCHIATRY	MD (PSYCHIATRY)	2	MIN 3 YEARS
UROLOGY	Mch / DNB (UROLOGY)	2	MIN 3 YEARS
DERMATOLOGY	MD (DERMATOLOGY)	3	MIN 3 YEARS
RHEUMATOLOGY	DM RHEUMATOLOGY	1	1-2 YEARS
PHYSIOTHERAPY	PROFFESOR	1	
	ASSOCIATE PROFFESOR	2	
	ASSISTANT PROFFESOR	3	

Interested candidates are requested to send their updated resumes and a covering letter to maaxhospitalcoo@gmail.com or submit them directly at the hospital's HR department.

Contact : 9900170055, 9741972180, 9821717978
Email: maaxhospitalcoo@gmail.com, maaxoperations@gmail.com

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATORS	MBA IN HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION MHA / FINANCE	6	1-2 YEARS
NURSING STAFF WITH MOTHER & CHILD CARE EXPERIENCE	BSC NURSING	30	1-2 YEARS
NURSING STAFF WITH ICU, OT EXPERIENCE	BSC NURSING	30	1-2 YEARS